

Message Text

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PAGE 01 AMMAN 06414 221332Z

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FM AMEMBASSY AMMAN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5738

S E C R E T AMMAN 6414

NODIS

FOR ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, US,JO

SUBJECT: HAWK MISSILES

REF: STATE 225118

1. I HAVE JUST BEEN IN TOUCH WITH RIFAI. RIFAI SAYS NEITHER HE NOR ANY OF HIS CABINET NOR AS FAR AS WE OR HE KNOW ANY RESPONSIBLE JORDANIANS HAVE TALKED TO RANDALL. FROM INFO BELOW, I HAVE EVERY REASON TO BELIEVE HIM. RANDALL, WHEN HE SAW US ABOUT HAWK SALE JUST PRIOR TO HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT PRESSED FOR ANY KIND OF COMMENT FROM THE EMBASSY AND MADE CLEAR THAT HE HAD HAD NO ACCESS TO SENIOR JORDANIANS AND ESPECIALLY RIFAI. AS STATED IN THE PRESS, WE OFFERED RANDALL NO COMMENT ON ANY ASPECT OF OUR DIFFICULTIES OVER HAWK. FROM WHAT RANDALL HAD TO TELL US AND HIS COMPLAINTS, WE SUSPECT HE WAS TALKING TO LOW-LEVEL AND NOT-WELL-CONNECTED JORDANIANS WHO WERE MERELY RE-ECHOING AGAIN THE SEPTEMBER 18 STATEMENT. WE TOLD RANDALL THERE WAS NO REPEAT NO STORY HERE AND URGED HIM TO REPORT NOTHING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE ISSUE. OBVIOUSLY WE WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL.

2. THE STORY ITSELF APPEARS TO CONTAIN INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS -- "NOT A SINGLE CONDITION HAS BEEN ACCEPTED" -- "DEAL MIGHT BE CONSUMMATED IF ONLY SMALL CHANGES ARE MADE." THAT ALONE SHOULD HELP TO CONVINCE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 AMMAN 06414 221332Z

CONGRESSIONAL CRITICS THAT THIS IS A STORY DREDGED UP

FROM LOCAL GOSSIP AND SOURCES WITH NO KNOWLEDGE. IN ADDITION, STORY BEARS NO RELATIONSHIP TO LEAKED PRESS STATEMENT SEPTEMBER 21 WHICH IS CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED TO AVOID IMPLICATION IN RANDALL STORY. IN ANY EVENT, WE ARE SURE RANDALL FILED WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF LEAKED STORY. ON BASIS INFORMATION REFTEL, STORY CLEARLY GOES BEYOND WHAT JORDAN "NEEDS" LOCALLY AND DOES THE JORDANIANS NO GOOD BECAUSE IT IS BEING PLAYED IN THE US, NOT HERE AND IS ALMOST SURE TO STIR UP THE CONGRESS AGAIN AGAINST THE SALE. THUS RIFAI'S OR GOJ'S OWN MOTIVES IN TALKING TO RANDALL, EVEN IF THEY HAD DONE SO WOULD BE OBSCURE IN OUR VIEW.

3. RIFAI FEELS IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU GET MESSAGE ACROSS TO CASE AND BINGHAM FOR HIM THAT JORDAN IS NOT SEEING FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND NOT BRIEFING THEM ON THIS ISSUE. IN AMMAN, AS IN WASHINGTON, IT CANNOT PREVENT CORRESPONDENTS FROM TALKING TO JORDANIANS ON THE STREET WHO ARE UNINFORMED OR ILL INFORMED. CASE AND BINGHAM SHOULD RECOGNIZE THAT THIS STORY DOES NOT REPEAT NOT REFLECT AN OFFICIAL POSITION OR AN OFFICIAL LEAK".

4. WE HAVE ALL RECOGNIZED THAT WE ARE NOT YET OUT OF THE WOODS BUT HOPE THAT IMMEDIATE ACTION WITH CASE AND BINGHAM AND OTHERS CAN REASSURE THEM THAT JORDANIANS HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THIS SUBJECT WITH RANDALL HERE, THAT HE WAS REFLECTING STREET GOSSIP AND STREET TALK FROM AMMAN AND THAT THERE IS NO REPEAT NO CHANGE IN THE JORDANIAN GOVERNMENT'S POINT OF VIEW WHICH HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO THEM THROUGH YOU.

5. IN ADDITION, IF SOPKESMAN COMMENT REQUIRED, WE SUGGEST FROM HERE AGAIN THAT WE MERELY SAY THAT WE DO NOT COMMENT UPON SPECULATIVE PRESS STORIES FROM ANY SOURCE. WE VERY MUCH HOPE THAT DEPARTMENT COULD HOLD THIS LINE WITH THE RANDALL STORY, WHICH IS CLEARLY IN THAT CATEGORY.

6. IF THERE IS ANYTHING MORE YOU REQUIRE FROM US BY WAY OF ASSURANCE FOR CASE AND BINGHAM OR POINTS TO MAKE,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 AMMAN 06414 221332Z

WE WILL BE STANDING BY. I BELIEVE THAT SINCE JORDANIANS HAVE NOT CHANGED THEIR POINT OF VIEW ON PARA 3 OF PRESIDENT'S LETTER OR STANDARD CONDITIONS IN CONTRACT THIS CAN BE CONVEYED TO THEM AGAIN IF IT IS REQUIRED TO MEET CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRIES.

7. FYI: JOE ALEX MORRIS OF LOS ANGELES TIMES WAS HERE WITH RANDALL. BOTH WERE GIVEN EXACTLY SAME

TREATMENT BY THE EMBASSY -- NO COMMENT ON CURRENT
ASPECTS OF HAWK ARRANGEMENTS AND ITS ATTENDANT PROBLEMS.
MORRIS WAS RETURNING TO BEIRUT SEPTEMBER 21 LOCAL
AND WE ARE NOT SURE WHETHER OR NOT HE FILED STORY
FOR LOS ANGELES TIMES. END FYI.
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